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ABSTRACT

This study of seven diverse New Zealand elementary and secondary schools explored specific and cumulative effects of school reform related to the New Zealand Curriculum Framework, which established an overall vision for reform, identifying seven core learning areas and other essential skills for students to develop. Researchers interviewed principals, teachers, and Board of Trustees' members, examining the impact of the curriculum and associated assessment reforms on various aspects of their and their students' work. Respondents unanimously agreed that the impact of Curriculum Framework reforms was tremendous, affecting their workload, programs, planning, assessment, and professional development. Respondents were generally supportive of the need for curriculum reform and positive about the Curriculum Framework. Significant changes in school programs followed the introduction of each new curriculum document. Respondents described certain patterns which improved practice, and therefore student learning. Patterns included increased detail in planning, programs, assessment, recording, and reporting; linkage from the curriculum documents to planning, programs, resources, teaching, assessment, and reporting to parents; development of more schoolwide structures to curriculum coverage and assessment than in the past; and more focus on individual student needs. Respondents reported a continuing preoccupation with assessment. (Contains 30 references.) (SM)

Curriculum Reform in New Zealand: what is really being done and is it worth the trouble?

Paper presented at the AARE-NZARE Conference

'Global Issues and Local Effects: The Challenge for Educational Research'

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by

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Abstract

The Curriculum Framework reforms of the 90s have differed markedly from past curriculum change in New Zealand in their scope, structure, process and impact on schools. As with most reform the driving force was the promise of improvements to children's learning. This paper will report on the findings from a new study of seven diverse schools, primary and secondary, in the greater Waikato region, which was designed to explore both the specific and cumulative effects of school reform. The study employed wide-ranging interviews with principals, teachers and Board of Trustees' members. The thread traced in this paper is the impact of the curriculum and associated assessment reforms on aspects of their and their students' work.

Teachers' positive response to the new curriculum documents might surprise those who critiqued the framework's ideology, structure, process of development and applicability. With regard to the implementation of the curriculum there is no doubt that the impact has been huge in its implications for teachers' work. It has steered their workload, programmes, planning, assessment and professional development. However the evidence of gains for student learning is less clear.

Introduction

The last decade has been a time of unprecedented reform in the New Zealand education system. As well as changes to school governance and administration, there have been major upheavals in curriculum and assessment. One of the goals underpinning the Tomorrow's Schools reforms in administration, was improved learning opportunities for all students. The curriculum reforms of the 1990s which followed, have continued with this platform of improved student achievement to explain their purpose:

The New Zealand Curriculum seeks to raise the achievement levels of all students and to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning in New Zealand schools is of the highest international standard. (Ministry of Education, 1993, p.3)

These curriculum reforms have differed markedly from past curriculum change in New Zealand in their scope, structure, process and impact on schools. This paper reports the findings of a study which tracks the influence of the new curriculum on teachers' work and their students' learning.

The New Curriculum Framework

The *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* sets out an overall framework and vision: the "official policy for teaching, learning and assessment in New Zealand schools" (Ministry of Education, 1993, p.3). It sets up seven core learning areas and identifies other essential skills for students to develop. The curriculum has a uniform structure of eight levels across all the learning areas. Achievement objectives, stated in terms of learning outcomes, are given in each level across various 'strands' of a subject. The achievement of knowledge and skills is perceived as a linear progression up a hierarchy of increasing difficulty. Students are assessed against these achievement objectives.

A strong relationship between learning and assessment is expressed in the Curriculum Framework, with a particular focus on 'assessment to improve students' learning and the quality of learning programmes' (Ministry of Education, 1993, p.24). Other purposes for assessment, such as providing feedback to parents and students, for certification, and national monitoring, also feature.

There has been considerable debate of the over the structure, policies and process used to develop and

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implement the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Aikin, 1994; Elley, 1996; Irwin, 1994; O'Neill, 1996; Peters & Marshall, 1996; Roberts, 1997). The scale of change was extraordinary compared to previous curriculum change which had been done on a subject by subject basis. In 'one fell swoop' the Curriculum Framework overhauled the school curriculum in its entirety, from Year 1 to Year 13. Teachers were faced with major shifts in their design and implementation of classroom curriculum. The process used to develop and implement the curriculum, the contract system, was alien to the established culture of educational change (Snook, 1996; McGee, 1997). Instead of taking their rightful central role in the change process, teachers were sidelined (McGee, 1997; Elliot, 1994) under the supposed threat of their 'provider capture'. The implementation schedule was optimistic with one new curriculum to be developed per annum. The curriculum documents had a very different focus and format from their predecessors, with the strands, the hierarchical levels of achievement objectives and a strong assessment focus.

Research on the impact of the Curriculum Framework on schools has been limited. Renwick and Gray (1995; 1997) and Wylie (1991; 1992; 1994; 1997) have researched reactions in primary schools, finding a generally positive reaction to the curriculum, but with increased workload and a greater focus on assessment. Calder (1995) surveyed teachers about the changes brought to assessment by the curriculum framework and found negative responses about the unreasonable effects on teachers' time which were, according to teachers, inhibiting the quality of their teaching. There have been, however, no studies which focus on the broad impact of the changes in curriculum on the work of teachers in schools and their students' learning.

The Waikato Study

There have been several major aspects to reforms in schools in the last decade which have impacted on curriculum and assessment: in particular self management and its administrative reforms; the Curriculum Framework; the Qualifications reforms; and the National Education Guidelines. Our study, Mapping the Cumulative Impact of Reforms, was designed to explore both the specific and cumulative effects of school reform. Part of this study looked at the impact of Curriculum Framework and its associated assessment reform on a diverse range of seven schools in the greater Waikato area. It set out to build up a qualitative dataset of a range of areas through broad ranging, semistructured interviews with 56 participants who were teachers, principals or Board of Trustee members.

We wanted to consider between-school contextual aspects hence the diverse range of schools, and in-school differences in outlook, so we asked the same questions of the teachers, senior staff and Board of Trustees members.

The sample comprised:

- Tahī - a low socio-economic status (SES) urban contributing primary school
- Rua - a high SES urban contributing primary school
- Toru - a low SES urban kura kaupapa Māori
- Wha - a low SES urban intermediate School
- Rima - a mid SES rural contributing primary school, with a teaching principal
- Ono - a low SES secondary School
- Whitu - a high SES secondary school

The questions in the curriculum and assessment area of our study asked about what real changes the Curriculum Framework had brought to aspects of teachers' work: workload, programmes, planning, assessment, professional development and teaching; and also to student learning. At that time, in late 1997-early 1998, the Mathematics, Science, English, Technology and Social Studies (draft) curriculum documents had been published.

General Response to the Curriculum Framework

In contrast with the prevailing response from academics, the schools in our study were overwhelmingly supportive of the need for curriculum reform and positive about the Curriculum Framework. This concurs with earlier findings of Aikin (1994), Renwick and Gray (1995), and Wylie (1997). The need to respond to ongoing change in the world and keep abreast with this influenced numerous responses. Others were concerned about the open-ended, non-prescriptive nature of previous curricula, the need for a 'tidy up' of certain subject areas, and the need for coordination across the years of schooling.

A wide range of aspects about the Curriculum Framework pleased respondents: the similarity of structure across the documents, the progression from Year 1-13, the continuity, the focus provided by the achievement

objectives, and its comprehensiveness.

In the following sections, the views of the participants about the impact of the Curriculum Framework on specific areas of teachers' work will be presented. They were asked 'What real changes has the Curriculum Framework brought for workload, programmes, planning, assessment, professional development and teaching?' Then follows the crucial area of the impact on students' learning, which may answer the question: has it been worth the effort?

Workload "blowout"

There was unanimous agreement that the impact on workload of the Curriculum Framework was 'huge' for all staff: 'the biggest single issue for teachers' (Principal, Ono). Workload had grown exponentially:

two-fold, three-fold, four-fold...Enormous. It's gone through the ceiling, it's ridiculous. In fact, it's gone so far, I believe, we are now saying, "Right, this is ridiculous, how can we cut it back", so we're becoming a little more realistic and chucking out the rubbish, and getting back to the nitty gritty. (Teacher, Rima)

Even the Board of Trustees members, who often sidestepped comment on curriculum areas as being outside their field, showed awareness and concern about the lack of Ministry resourcing for professional development and understanding of the effect on teacher workloads:

The Ministry, it would be that they haven't acknowledged that; and they haven't provided adequate training programmes, adequate release time for staff to go and get upskilled in them. I think they've left too much up to schools to cover, and that's created problems as, for example, our teacher relief budget. We could swallow it all up with curriculum-related courses. (Principal, Whitu)

Numerous reasons were given to explain the blowout which such a major change brings to teachers: the speed of implementation, the need to become familiar with new approaches and new areas, developing new programmes, the rewriting of school programmes and schemes, paperwork for the Education Review Office, planning, meetings, increased focus on assessment and data collection, and developing or obtaining resources. The need to become familiar with a new approach to curriculum and new curriculum areas, for example, technology, takes time:

There's a lot of time required, particularly with those first two or three curriculum areas that came out - getting to know how they were operated, understanding the context of them. Understanding the strand nature of them. But now... because of the consistency of patterning of the various curriculum areas, people are now very easily able to adapt to each new one as it comes out. Remember there's a fair bit of learning to be done, too, in the area of technology. Because technology really was a totally new curriculum area. So that was another one that needed to be re-thought. So, there's a fair bit of learning that's had to take place, but funnily enough teachers adapt fairly quickly. (Principal, Rua)

In secondary schools the fact that the Qualifications Framework was introduced at a similar time to the new curriculum had teachers reeling amidst a confusion of levels and competing requirements:

...because of the speed that these things have been introduced. And when you put the assessment on top of that, it's just been crazy. The biggest single issue facing teachers is workload. And it's a combination of curriculum change, assessment change, and more difficult kids. It's as simple as that. And more pressure on schools. (Principal, Ono)

The effects of the explosion in workload in the area of curriculum and assessment were having a clear impact on schools. These were soberly described as including burnout, loss of men to the profession, anxiety, loss in teacher innovation and initiative, and less co-curricular involvement by teachers struggling to keep up with their situation:

There is less preparedness to do the co-curricula things, which the school is very strong at. But I know that at many schools there is beggar all left, because that's where they've walked away from... But certainly the effects are that people are much less prepared, you know, we run a fund raising thing and oh gee, the staff are mm... Whereas they didn't used to. Try and get sports coaches for cricket teams. Much harder than it used to be. (Principal, Ono)

Redeveloped programmes

Significant changes in school programmes followed the introduction of each new curriculum document. As schemes were rewritten, resources developed or bought, so programmes changed in the classroom. Programmes and practice have had to be reviewed. This was seen not only to enforce a continuing cycle of more relevant, improving practice for individual teachers, but also for subject departments in secondary

schools, and schools as a whole:

I think that schools are now more aware of what they try to teach. They know what they're trying to do as a whole school. I think that's been a real positive side in your programmes, as a school, in all curriculum areas...I think that documents require that, too, that whole long-term looking at where you're going and what you should be trying to achieve. I guess it's similar to the old school schemes, but it's a lot more refined, and defined, in what you should be doing. (DP, Tahiti)

A clear link was established between programmes, planning, resources and assessment:

We're constantly trying to do things better, as they say. So we're constantly reviewing our programmes and the assessment of them. Upgrading resources. Our expectations at all levels in terms of knowing precisely what we're teaching, having carefully planned programmes, developing resources to use in those programmes, and then very precise assessment structures. (English teacher, Ono)

The longer a curriculum had been gazetted, the more likely it was that a pool of resources was available for teachers to consult in developing their programmes and this 'enforced compliance' with the new documents:

There's a whole lot of resources becoming available now which makes implementing the curriculum very easy. In fact, it's hard not to implement the curriculum, because if you go and buy a Third Form textbook it automatically forces you to implement the curriculum, 'cos that's the way it's been written... (HOD Maths, Whitu)

One of the concerns expressed about the curriculum (Aikin, 1994) was that it would stifle holistic approaches, curriculum integration, and produce greater compartmentalism of areas of learning. The subject divisions in secondary schools were found to be still clearly demarcated. In primary schools integration was seldom mentioned.

School-wide tightly structured approaches to curriculum coverage were explained in two of the primary schools:

From the curriculum we have taken out and looked at our years one to six and said, "Right, in year one in science - this is what you cover", and we've broken down the objectives as well into odd and even years so everything is covered. And English...just take written language, for example, this year expressive language as being our focus. And so the even year is transactional writing. Last year we did transactional - so next year - so we have a focus, and we actually have set up little schemes that come in the same coloured covers as the curriculums. So it's there, so for any new teachers that come in - this is what you're doing in maths, science - the same in maths - we've broken...everything down into your number and algebra and what you should be covering for a year at the different levels. And we've also done that for health and physical well-being and art and music, even though the curriculums are not out. (AP, Rua)

Subjects which might have been left out in the past, particularly the arts, were now being taught in a much more focussed manner in some schools. An example was in one of the secondary schools where music and drama were reported as having been neglected in the past. (AP, Whitu).

Some participants contradicted Aikin's (1994) anxieties about a move away from the child-centred focus of New Zealand primary education by describing a stronger concentration on student needs, and an example of student input into programmes in a secondary school:

These have changed. For example in maths there is an emphasis on investigation and problem solving. Grouping systems have changed and are flexible. We tend to teach to needs more. (Principal, Rima)

I have the students' input. I ask them what they want to see in the programme, 'cos students, even nowadays, are saying, 'Oh the programme's boring, school's boring'. So what you do to get over that kind of barrier, is ask them what they want in the programme. Put it in the programme. Assess it, and say, 'Well this is what you asked for, and this is what I'm giving you', done. (HOD Maori, Whitu)

There were concerns about fitting everything in to make the curriculum balanced, the possibility of over assessment, emphases, positioning of content, quality and the time required to rewrite programmes and schemes:

You've got so many points of reference to design new things, so it's the constant re-writing, re-shaping of curriculum at the broad level, at the scheme level if you like, that's really time consuming because, again, as I said, you've got to design the instruments, and how you're going to

present it; it's not just, this is where we're going, this is how we're going to go to get there. So it actually means its down to lesson units and lesson plans, and that's where the work is. (AP, Ono)

One secondary Maths department had changed the structures of its programme delivery to a modular system to rationalize teachers' workload. This involved students circulating from one teacher to the next every six to eight weeks after the completion of a particular content area. This was both lauded and criticized by individuals having to implement it.

More focussed planning.

Planning had changed, it was generally agreed, to be more thorough, specific, detailed and focussed, carefully related to the curriculum document achievement objectives:

The planning is far more detailed. Far more detailed than what I would have ever anticipated. But also it's more individual. Because of the technology programmes it's almost like an IEP for every child that's in the school, because that's what its become, based on their needs and opportunities. It's become more detailed like that. (Longstanding teacher, Wha)

Clear links between the curriculum documents, planning, teaching moves, and assessment were the norm:

People have come up with very effective models of how to do it, so that your objective is here, what you're gonna do is here, and then the assessment activities are there. (Principal, Tah)

The changing characteristics of students today, both primary and secondary, were suggested as another reason for needing more innovative and thorough planning:

The students are different now to students of days of old. They are more demanding, they are more difficult. It's a bigger challenge to keep them occupied, and on target, and focused, and understanding, etc. etc. And so I think good teachers now are probably planning as thoroughly as the excellent teachers used to in order to survive. (Principal, Ono)

There was also mention of more combined or cooperative types of planning amongst primary teachers in particular:

I see so much more combined planning. I mean, I love to see it - across syndicates, across teams, people getting together...A team meeting and then one person walking away and planning and then bringing it back and so forth. I see a heck of a lot more of what we call cooperative planning. And I mean, that to me must reduce workload in a sense. And certainly I encourage that sort of thing among teachers. I don't think it's had any greater impact on planning. (Principal, Rua)

Concerns related to planning surfaced mainly with secondary teachers with regard to the time involved, time to 'learn' the content of the curriculum, and the stronger link with assessment in the planning cycle:

I should imagine, once you've got it organized then it should be all right; but you'd need to do it for three or four years I'd think before you could sit back and say, 'Okay, I know where I'm going to now'. (Science teacher, Ono)

Increased assessment

The impact of the Curriculum Framework had brought real changes in the quantity of assessment and teachers' practice. Many of the themes explained in Wylie's latest studies (1994, 1997), are replicated in the responses of teachers. These include obvious change in practice and amount of assessment, greater individualization, greater specificity, and the use of school-wide procedures which were not a feature of many schools before the new curriculum. The impact of the National Education Guidelines and the need to complete the 'must' section of assessment was mentioned.

There was unanimous acknowledgment of change, particularly a greater focus on assessment:

That's a big one, and that's still being thrashed out at the moment by many people. And it's one of the most interesting facets when you go to one of these curriculum document sessions. That's the bit where people really sit up because it's the most time-consuming and any questions asked as to what is the purpose, what is this assessment for, who am I doing it for, and I think really it's very much - a very high focus area, because assessment is kind of like the big word. But I think it's very much in it's infancy. I don't think people have quite settled as to which is the best way. Maybe there isn't a best way. I think probably it'll be varied...(ST, Rua)

Even half of the Board of Trustees' (BOT) members recorded an awareness of an increase in workload and activity in the area of assessment. They had detailed ideas of what was involved for teachers and tied them to

the curriculum document. This was exceptional. In response to most questions related to teaching most BOT members felt unable to respond because they knew little about the areas:

I know with all the curriculum changes there are more assessment programmes brought in, and we seem to hear a lot of squawks about the work load, and not enough time. (BOT Chair, Ono)

There were a range of views in response to this increased focus on assessment. Some teachers were positive about it, noting aspects of practice which have improved:

I like the way it's made staff concentrate on the achievement objectives. It has brought a focus on the achievement objectives. There's a bigger emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. We talk about this - it's only important if we're doing it for the kids. I think there's a 'vagueness' in teachers' minds about expectations of where children should be. (Principal, Rima)

Other teachers, however, viewed the impact as largely negative. It was taking the joy out of teaching and eroding the expanse of the teacher's professional judgement:

Assessment has just opened up a whole can of worms I think. For assessment, especially for our teachers now, I think that it's taken the joy, it's taken their enthusiasm of teaching and participating in education, somebody's educational life, I think that's just taken it all away. We now have to be able to provide evidence, and evidence comes in the form of, most times, comes in the form of tests; comes in the form of some sort of document, documentation of some kind. I think some schools have been innovative in that they've videoed, and I think that's good; but the evidence that's required I think they've taken away the teacher's professional judgement, that's come into question for a number of our teachers, "so my opinion no longer counts, it has to be written and recorded in some way" before it's believed. (Teacher, Toru)

A greater amount of assessment was often noted, sometimes with ambivalence relating to its value:

Assessment definitely. A lot more assessment. I wonder about the value of a lot of it, I really do. I think there probably did need to be changes in assessment. I just keep thinking about the core subjects, there was certainly a need for more information, not just individual, but as a school, information on reading, writing, and your maths. But I really do question that the importance, or the need to have as much assessment in all the other curriculum areas, I wonder about the value of it, to be honest. You need it, but to the extent that we are expected to do it, I think there's a lot of doubling up on stuff. And I wonder about the value of it in terms of, is it improving teaching programmes? In some areas it is, definitely, yes. I don't know, it's a lot of paper work for the sake of it. So there's definitely been a change in assessment. (DP, Tahiti)

One result of the increase in focus on, and quantity of assessment undertaken, was the encroachment on teacher time and workload:

Teachers run around like headless chickens trying to find easy ways of doing assessments. Everything from anecdotal comments to checklists which look beautiful but don't actually say anything. And we're always getting asked, which ones do you use. We use a variety, but this whole link up between assessment and the planning, I just worry that there's too much time spent on it. We need simple ways of doing it that are effective. (ST, Wha)

Assessment had become more accurate, detailed and specific in the opinions of many:

Assessing has become more detailed by far. More attuned to the objectives and the learning outcomes. It all goes back to the document. Whereas under the old system it was just so much wider, as long as you wrote a comment you were OK, but this time everything has got to be you know, why did you assess that, and why are you assessing that. It's all got to be gone back to the document. Far more than what I would ever have had to do in the past. (Longstanding teacher, Wha)

A pattern of improved practice through use of a greater variety of methods was explained:

... we have our own assessment meetings and our own assessment documents and we've changed radically in the last two years to individual profiles on children and all sorts of interesting things like that...Assessment is just big here, that's all. (ST, Rua)

The use of more individualized assessment emerged in the responses of Principals and teachers:

I don't think we did that as well before. Assessment is now individualized and classroom-focussed. School-wide assessment was not used before. (Principal, Rima)

It's made me more aware of children's individual needs. As part of assessment, the writing, [I'm]

taking off on clipboards. Assessment is more specific to the achievement objectives. I previously did assess to aims though. It's almost more specific somehow, now. (ST, Rima)

As Elley (1996) predicted, the problems of an outcome-based system for subjects like English were evident to some teachers. They found the achievement objectives too broad:

The English one, if you look at the objectives, they are so broad, How can you? We've gone to other sources to get decent kind of, like First Steps, to get bits that tell us that these are the behaviours of kids of about this age. (Principal, Tahiti)

The need to comply with the National Education Guidelines and accountability in relation to Education Review Office requirements also featured in the responses:

I think it's forced teachers to make, to experiment with different styles of assessing, to come up with one that they can work with; and one that helps them with the children; and one that covers the legal requirements, for ERO. So we've had to experiment with that, which is a good thing. (Teacher, Rima)

A major impact was the implementation of schoolwide systems of aggregation to assist with school wide accountability as required by the Education Review Office:

It should have very much streamlined the whole process of...procedures and practice... Assessment and aggregation is clearly defined. We know what we're going to do at the beginning of the year. What we're going to end up with. What we're achieving. What we want to achieve, and how we're going to achieve that, and what form of assessments will be required to see how the children have performed at the end. So a pre- and a post- stage, where assessment is integral in the whole implementation plan, it goes right through the centre of it. So, then, the classroom teacher, it is there in one form, rather than disjointed, 'All right, I'll take this today, and I'll do this'...(DP, Rua)

There was a difference in the tenor of responses of primary and secondary schools with regard to this question. It became clear that high stakes credentialling assessment had hijacked the thinking of some secondary teachers. Their involvement with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the implementation of the Qualifications Framework overwhelmed their view of assessment to such an extent that often the question about the impact of the Curriculum Framework on assessment was lost in a tirade of information about the rights and wrongs of the numerous changes in assessment methods that secondary teachers had had to contend with over a short number of years. Concerns about the impact on workload, and that an obsessive concern for assessment might be dominating teaching, were mainly isolated to responses from secondary teachers, which suggest a shift in primary schools from the preoccupations found by Calder (1995) in 1995:

So the assessment impact, the work on Unit Standards, there's been an enormous impact on trying to measure the curriculum in new ways. And what comes first? There's no doubt that assessment has been far too great a preoccupation in our strategic plan. We're worried about the curriculum and its associated things. The assessment will follow, but basically the assessment, the assessment thing, the whole vast structure....(AP, Ono)

Enhanced recording and reporting

Most participants believed recording and reporting had also changed. In relation to records were concerns about the increase in the paperwork, which included material needed to satisfy the Education Review Office accountability audits, which was impacting on workload:

I think paper work in particular, I think there is just too much of that. It's putting a lot of people off the whole job. It comes back to what I said before, I think people are forgetting what they're here for; and important things that time should be spent on is not always being spent on that, in terms of just getting things ready, preparing things, not all this extra planning and, oh... There's a lot of males, and males are renowned for....never being brilliant with the paper work, but I think the work load is a major concern. (DP, Tahiti)

Also descriptions were given of the more difficult scenarios that any change brings for workload in small schools, including small secondary departments and small rural primary schools, and specialist technology teachers who see all the students in a school or several schools.

For reporting to parents, across both primary and secondary sectors emerged themes of greater detail, links to curriculum, specificity, comprehensiveness, and constant review and change. Particular curriculum areas in secondary schools showed similar themes of constant review and quest for improvement. Greater detail was being provided for parents in the reports:

The parents are getting much more detailed reports. And each report is broken up into sections, so

they don't just get a geometry grade, it's isolated skills which relate to the curriculum. The recognition of basic shapes. Can they manipulate angles? Do they understand basic geometry theories? That kind of thing. Can they present an argument in a written form which I can follow? (HOD Maths, Ono)

Reports were more specific with links from the classroom work to the report, often supported with evidence such as profiles:

... we've got these individual profiles for children so that we have something specific for them to browse and look at and to consider. And we meet with our parents formally once a year and we have a formal report once a year. So we use the types of objectives that we teach during the year to actually report...I find that quite interesting because in the past you tended to just talk about the child and what you knew about it. But now you tend, your mind tends to be thinking about it, how they actually deal with the essential skills and all those things that have come in. (ST, Rua)

There was a culture in schools of constant review and change, not always welcomed by teachers:

While they're making up their mind in the Ministry on their philosophy, depending who's in charge at the time, it's filtering through to us. We're changing everything. They change their mind, they filter it through to us, and we change again, and it's driving us insane. (Teacher, Rima)

There were descriptions of the changes in formats to written reports, and also to the timing of reports and interviews within the year, which resulted in part from the Curriculum Framework, but also from the move to a four-term year, or the use of modular systems of school timetabling. There was also mention of a change in the way that reports were worded, from euphemisms and vague terms such as 'making progress', to much more clear descriptions of what a child could do. There was a desire to be honest rather than too positive as in some past practice:

We've chucked out all this positive stuff, and we've, no that's not true. We've honed in on what the children can do, of course we have, but it's very important now that we say to them, "This is where you're heading", and why, in terms that they will understand. Because you can tell a parent something in a lovely glowing way, sweet, but you're actually covering a problem, and you're doing yourself no favours these days, none at all. (Teacher, Rima)

Parents' responses to the changes they were making were important to teachers, who were trying to communicate with parents in plain language, backed with evidence of students' work. It was noted that ranking or grading was no longer provided for parents and yet some felt that parents wanted to know how their child was progressing in relation to the other students in their class or age group:

Parents all want to know where their child is at in comparison to others, despite the focus on the individual. Parents seem satisfied, if they know where their child is at. (Principal, Rima)

There was some effort to use the terminology and structure of the Curriculum Framework in reports. The use of levels and a checklist system was one example mooted. Some concern was raised in relation to the ability of parents to understand the new terms and structure.

The reasons for the changes were explained as a result of greater teacher accountability in the 'new' climate; as an indirect result of curriculum change. Also it could be attributed to the changing relationship between schools and home. In some schools, the parents and the pupil were expected to participate in an interview with the teacher, which portrayed a scenario which in previous years would have only have been seen in the development of IEPs for students with special needs. Overall there seemed to be more and improved communication with parents, with schools very responsive to parents' concerns:

I think there's been a big improvement there. I think Tomorrow's Schools [has] forced the teachers to be more accountable to the parents, and I think that's been reflected in the reports we get. There's more communication between the teachers and parents now. (BOT member, Whitu)

The concerns aligned to the changes in reporting again highlighted workload:

The expectations make it increasingly complicated. We really struggled with that, the work load things again. The more expectation, that we report more frequently, and tell people what's going on, and try to be more exact all the time of what we say. (DP, Ono)

The over-comprehensiveness of some school reporting systems was mentioned, some were seen as far too lengthy:

Well we write Bibles here. (ST, Wha)

There were some concerns about parents' lack of understanding of about the new curriculum:

I think parents have heard a lot about this curriculum so they want to know where the children are in this new curriculum. But they don't actually know what the curriculum is. (ST, Wha)

Professional development inadequacies

The Curriculum Framework had dominated the focus of the majority of professional development for teachers since its introduction. The annual focus of school programmes tended to follow the most recent curriculum to be developed for which there were usually contracts in professional development being offered by the Ministry or School Support Services:

The subjects that are doing the big changes at the time tend to, you know, dominate. (Principal, Ono)

In this aspect a contextual variation emerged. The high decile primary school gave a scenario of adequate funding, numerous opportunities for all staff and positive responses to the current situation. The programme was well planned, well known and endorsed by the Board of Trustees and included specifically designed material and provision of trainers for the staff "in-house", rather than be dependant solely on that provided by the Ministry of Education contracts. It also involved use of 'holidays'.

Other positives which emerged for professional development from the introduction of the Curriculum Framework were a stronger national focus, more opportunity for development, and more encouragement given to teachers who displayed a keenness to be involved:

There has been a lot of professional development and that can never be a bad thing, thinking about how we teach and what we teach. So I think that's always good. And I think teachers are much more up to date with what's going on, and more aware of professional development than I can remember them ever being. (DP, Wha)

However, the predominant theme emerging from all the other schools, including the higher decile secondary, was of inadequate resourcing. Senior management staff were notably in agreement in this area - there was insufficient money:

But I'm of the opinion that there's not definitely enough money available. Now I wanted to go to the only Horticultural professional development day, and because there was no funds in there then, either I had to pay for it myself, and pay for a reliever, or not go. And in the end I didn't go because I felt, well, the system should be making it available to me. (Science teacher, Ono)

The opportunities provided for teachers to become familiar with the new curricula were inadequate, with many teachers having no professional development:

In school in general, no, because I've heard of many many teachers that get to none of them, because the school's too large, they've got no money; and only one teacher will go on the development courses, and then won't share; and you don't learn as well off someone giving it to you second hand. You don't have the equipment, and you don't have the buzz of feeling...Time. So, no, I don't think so, in any way, shape or form, have they done that. We're lucky. We're exceptionally lucky that we could do them all the way we did. We fed off each other, and the whole school did them all, but I couldn't tell you another school that did that. (Teacher, Rima)

Even where the school was able to send teachers for professional development it could not always be achieved because of the availability and cost of paying relievers, and the limits to the time teachers can be out of their classes:

As whether or not you actually have the time to take them, when we're talking about workload. Does your workload permit you going out and doing extra, as work should. (HOD Maaori, Ono)

The lack of resources from the Ministry to implement the curriculums following inservice was a worry:

But the follow-up is poor. The Ministry don't provide enough or the right kind of resources. Do they think that NZ teachers have been good at making their own resources? The resources are not enough to implement programmes to the level they should be. The courses themselves are good and the follow up in the school. The facilitators come back to the school and can be contacted later. (ST, Rima)

The incredibly short timeframes given for feedback and implementation were criticised:

No, I don't think so. Each curriculum area should have been spread over two years to allow

consolidation, for example the professional development could be done in the first year and implementation in the second. All the curriculums came in too quickly. (Principal, Rima)

The teacher as 'facilitator'

Most teachers and principals noted a considerable impact on teaching as a result of the curriculum reforms. Teaching had changed in its content and most obviously the methods or style:

...but I think it has made teaching more effective. I think it's made programmes more interesting and varied. I think it's made teachers more aware of different teaching styles, and different learning styles as well. (DP, Wha)

A 'facilitator' was the term used by many to explain the current role of teachers in comparison to the past of 'chalk and talk' or 'blackboard teaching'. This description concurs with Griffin and Smith (1996, cited in Griffin, 1998) who, in explaining the changes that profiles and outcome-based education require in the approaches to teaching and learning, explain that the "the role of the teacher needs to change from the transmitter of information to a facilitator of learning"(p.13):

Teachers effectively have become much more facilitators than teachers because of the content and the curriculum documents. I think you don't see the sort of old talk and chalk sort of style that you would have seen years ago when you were able to just stick to a narrow field of learning. (ST, Rua)

Interactive methods, modelling, 'hands-on' activities, experiential, exploratory, project based, practicals, problem solving, investigations, and group work were some of the teaching methods described. The strong influence that the approaches prescribed by a particular curriculum document had on teaching were explained by subject specialists in Maths and Science from the secondary schools:

It happened with the curriculum document, because not only did the curriculum change, but also there was a whole change in teaching styles happened as well. And the Maths Adviser comes round and they push this project-based, investigative approach to mathematics. You don't tell kids about Pythagoras's theorem, you construct a situation and... the shift and the emphasis is that you don't actually teach kids how to do these things manually, but you teach them to understand what they're doing, and then you use the technology and apply the mathematics to much more difficult, real world, problems than you ever could have before;... You actually do real engineering problems, and this is quite good too, because it gives the kids a motive for doing it because they see themselves as getting involved in the real work, or real problems. (HOD Maths, Whitu)

There were diverse views over the issue of whether teaching was more child-centred, and individualised than before the Curriculum Framework, with some endorsing the emphasis:

Teaching has probably become more child-centred and very much to the individual child. [I've] tried to hone in on individuals so they do cover the specifics. It's made me more aware of children's individual needs. (ST, Rima)

One principal felt this was not the case and was pushing for a return to a more child centred philosophy. He felt the attention given to curriculum and assessment was taking the focus off good teaching practice which was viewed as being child-centred. Other teachers felt that although numerous exciting activities were undertaken in the classroom there may not be the links established to ensure learning, or retention:

They get good ideas, and interesting activities, and all that, but I still wonder about the actual teaching, how much teaching is getting done, and that would be a major concern of mine. Lots of neat things going on, but not necessarily a link to it all. Do you know what I mean? (ST, Tah)

Student Learning

To be able to claim a positive outcome for the reforms in curriculum, evidence of gains for student learning would be necessary, given their importance as a goal. The desire for an improvement in student learning clearly underpinned the reforms in curriculum: "In recent years, governments, both in New Zealand and overseas, have introduced major curriculum policies to reform outdated systems, to increase educational opportunities, and to raise educational standards." (Ministry of Education, 1993, p.28) Despite the importance of opinion in this area, given the goals of reform, over a third of the participants did not respond to this question. This was particularly noticeable in secondary schools and the kura kaupapa. Of those who did respond, only 11 were positive about the impact of the curriculum on student learning. Six said there had been no discernable improvement and a further 12 were ambivalent.

What had brought about the improvement in student learning for those who felt that this was so?

Some respondents thought learning must improve because of improved teaching styles. Teachers are using a greater variety of teaching styles and strategies, and are reflecting on the effectiveness of the strategies they use:

And it impacts on the kids because they get a better range of teaching styles and strategies. It also stops and...makes me, use different methods with my children. If one doesn't work I'll go to a hundred others, because I know I've got to get them past a certain requirement. So, yeah, its probably honed my teaching, and that can only be good for the kids. And I have a huge knowledge of the curriculum, where I never would have before. (Teacher, Rima)

It must rise, the student learning must improve if teachers are continually being forced to re-examine their strategy, and all aspects. (HOD Science, Ono)

The use of more active 'hands-on,' real-life activities rather than expository methods of teaching had helped student learning:

I think in some areas it's really improved the student learning, because they've actually had hands-on and been able to do the activities, rather than accepting what I say is true, then they've actually gone out and seen that it is. In things like, with our trigonometry, we went out and measured the school flag pole, and things like that, rather than having just to do a calculation, accepting that what I said was true, and things like that, so in a lot of areas that's been good. (Maths Teacher, Ono)

As for most questions related to curriculum it was unusual for BOT members to make an observation. However one trustee suggested that more 'hands-on' ways of learning were having a payoff:

Just the way they inter-react to each other; the way that they discuss things in a classroom; they don't just walk into a classroom now, sit down, and look at a text book all day. They get out there and they learn ... they can do it outside or inside, or they can discuss it. More so than when perhaps when I went to school. I think the way that they learn things now is a lot better than when we went to school. It's much more interesting. It's much more in-depth. It's much less, I wouldn't say it's less brain taxing, but I think...its more interesting. Yeah, the way they learn these days, the way they teach, the way they set up programmes, the way they do everything. There's a lot more effort probably goes into it now, and a lot more is expected of a teacher than when we went to school. (BOT member, Ono)

Also teachers are more specific and focussed over what they are teaching and what they are wanting the students to learn:

...it has to be better for the students, I think. If teachers are more focussed ...it's becoming more specific ... and everything is more refined. I think that must be better for children in the long run and that their learning will be better. (AP, Rua)

...it's focused on certain things. You can say "Yes, he can write a story. He can write a report. He can do a bit of transactional writing. He can do that. He can do that. He can make a display", so it's much more focused, and I think that was a very good thing, because then you could measure them, whereas in the past we were saying, "Well, yes, he's able to write fluently". What is he able to write fluently? (Principal, Tahī)

Another reason offered was because of improved assessment practice, more precise criteria:

There would be an improvement based on the assessment improvement. (AP, Ono)

Student learning should be better, because...the aims of what we're doing, the criteria that we use to assess things is so much more precise now...(English teacher, Ono)

It was also suggested that the perceived improvement in student learning was because children are more involved today in their learning than in past; approaches used give students more information - the students know what they are learning, what they have to achieve, and there is greater emphasis on their working together:

I'm sure the students like the new curriculum better, because they know what they're learning, where they're going, sometimes. I think the work is more interesting on the whole, and I think there's more emphasis on kids working together, which is good. And as much as possible the student-based learning is good too I think. Where you can implement it that's great. (HOD English, Ono)

...if students know exactly, you know, they used to just do a piece of work and not really have too

much of an idea of what they were being assessed for, and even after they got the mark back and looked at it they didn't really know. Now, what they're being assessed for, what they've got to try and build into it is much more clearly stated, and I think that is having an effect on student learning in some respects. I think it's narrowing what we're doing, but there are advantages and disadvantages of that. And in terms of giving clear focus to learning, students knowing exactly what they've got to achieve, I think it's better in that sense. (English teacher, Ono)

A more child-centred, individualised focus was another reason proffered for improvement in student achievement, independent learning was being encouraged:

...the individuality of the child, I think, has been highlighted more today...I think that perhaps as a teacher I used to think that way anyway. But I think we're a lot more aware of the different learning needs of children, and I guess the assessment practices that we're expecting of staff focuses very much on that. And so I suppose that in terms of student learning there's a lot more programming towards children's needs, which I hope means that children enjoy their time and experience some success in their school time. And I think that's certainly happening here. (Principal, Rua)

And the missing thing in the past may have been the child, but not now. We've brought the child into that regime. Out there at present, they're making some games. They know why they're making them. They understand what it's for in technology. ...So it's brought the child into the centre, really into the centre. 'Gee whiz I'm making these decisions', okay, so they've got to get it right themselves. (DP, Rua)

It's always the hard one to measure, but I think the encouragement of independence with learning is good. (DP, Wha)

One of the ways that changes were identified was by noting areas of skills where improvement had been noted over those of students in the past. Some aspects mentioned were the more inquiring nature of students, competence in visual language, and problem solving skills:

I think children are more inquiring in many ways than they used to be. Some of them are more lateral in their thinking than they used to be...They're better though visually. And with audio/visual material they're often very very good. A lot of them are very good with production skills, which previously many weren't. (Principal, Ono)

I think possibly the kids are getting more attuned to more problem solving activities. Finding out their own solutions to things. And perhaps realising that in certain... and I'm talking about technology, there is not really a...right answer or the wrong answer. If that is the solution you came to then let's go with it. (Longstanding teacher, Wha)

Those who felt the curriculum reforms had not improved student learning suggested a range of reasons for this viewpoint. One was that current evidence is pointing to less well-developed skills, particularly in the areas of numeracy and literacy. Sometimes it was acknowledged that perhaps the nature of skills needed to function satisfactorily in today's society might be changing:

...and a lot of the evidence suggests otherwise at the moment, in terms of literacy and numeracy skills for example, with all the publicity. I think it would depend on what your anticipated outcomes were.... But a lot of them are lower in their literacy skills than they used to be. They don't read like they used to. They don't need to. (Principal, Ono)

I don't really see any evidence that kids know more. In fact, you see lots of evidence they don't know as much as I did when I was at school. I look at their literacy levels, and I have quite clever, capable, maths students who can't spell, and in my day that would have been almost unthinkable. I'm pretty sure I'm right in saying that. (HOD Maths, Ono)

I think they need to refocus on some additional ones, in terms of just straight out computational skills, 'cos I think that's actually gone down the bloody hill. Is that true across the board?... I said [to a staff member], 'These kids in Standard 4 can't bloody subtract'. And he said, 'Well if you gave them a calculator they could get the answer.' I said... 'They should do it in their heads'... What happens when the batteries run out? (Principal, Tahiti)

The curriculum with its focus on recorded assessment for accountability, was viewed as effectively sidelining the teacher as a professional:

... just as an example, I remember someone saying to me, "Could you walk into your classroom without one of your assessment folders, and say where the child is?" And I can. And I could have 20 years ago. I could say, "This child can do this, this, this and this, because this is how he does it", or

"This is what he lacks", or "This is what he needs work on". And I can still do that now without them, and do at times. So, no, I don't think so. (Teacher, Rima)

More may be being expected of young children which might be developmentally inappropriate:

I think perhaps there may be more pressure on children at this early level to learn. I don't know whether that's a good thing sometimes. I keep remembering how young they are, and I keep within the bounds of what they are developmentally able to cope with, and socially able to cope with, and physically as well. Sometimes I think we ask too much of young children. (Longstanding teacher, Rua)

Some comments suggested that children today are less tolerant- not as good in groups or in cooperative settings. The modular way of teaching was not effective according to one maths teacher:

Maybe because of the pressures of life in general kids are less tolerant and don't always work well in group situations. (ST, Rima)

our particular system we have here in Form 3 and 4, I don't think its having a great effect upon them; because, let's be honest, if you have a class for the whole year you are responsible for them; and if they do badly with a similar ability group then you obviously have failed. But this way you can hide. And I think that is the attraction of it for some people. (Maths teacher, Ono)

Many participants were ambivalent in their responses to this question. One reason was the complexity of such a question, which made it difficult for many to answer:

No, compared to the old system, I can't really know whether we're better or worse quite frankly. It's like an old car or the new car really. Unless you've been involved with both of them...(BOT Chair, Ono)

I think it's a 30 year measure, isn't it? Or a 20 year measure, so I don't know. (BOT Chair, Wha)

Once again, I don't think I'm... It's pretty hard to judge. Unless you divide your child in half somehow, and teach in one system and the other, and then get the results, there's no real way of knowing, unless you have a controlled group, which is the old way. It's a pretty subjective judgement to make isn't it? So I don't know, I couldn't tell you. The kids seem to learn pretty well, they've all come out with a good education. (BOT Chair, Rima)

The complication which the question posed was also tied up with the complexity of the classroom situation. It was pointed out that when one considers the dynamics of teaching with 30 students in a class and the innumerable factors influencing that environment, a prediction of certain improvement becomes difficult. The relationship between learning and teaching is complex:

I look back and think, you hope so. You look at ways of doing things, you're always looking for ways to do things better. But its often difficult. You put all these new things in place and then you wonder ... in terms of the kids, how they react, would sometimes make you suggest, ... things haven't changed. They haven't hit the target, if there is a target sort of....I think the whole education scene and why do kids learn, is really an area of, a hugely complex one which to some extent we don't fully understand. Sometimes just the pressure of how do you deal with 30 kids in a classroom, doesn't allow you to use some of the excellent material that has come out. And often teachers haven't got the time to delve into the latest theories of learning. And even the same class, you know, they can get involved in something and then be completely turned off by another thing. (Longstanding teacher, Ono)

Some suggested there had been a change in emphasis in what was valued because of the curriculum changes, which in the past would not have been acceptable. Quality was being sacrificed for problem solving in the area of technology:

I have given away, I have sacrificed quality in this room for problem solving, and I know every other technology teacher, we've talked about this, has had to do it. If they come up with a solution that you might not actually personally agree with, that they're happy with, and they have solved the problem, and they're going to take that home, then I cross my fingers and hope that somebody at home is going to hope that it's OK. Because the quality is not as good. So the curriculum changes has meant that for these rooms, the technology rooms, the quality is sacrificed. A bit like the writing skills, I guess. If they've done the work and it's not as good a quality as it should be, have they still achieved the outcome which was to do the work? That whole standard thing. They might be thinking a bit more, but I don't know really whether it has altered them. If we'd asked the right questions before the curriculum reforms I don't there'd be much difference. (Longstanding teacher, Wha)

What did emerge for many who were ambivalent was the important influence of the teacher on learning:

I'd question whether the kids are any better off today than they were 10 years ago, I really do. Again, I guess, it still comes back to what happens in the classroom. It depends very much on the teacher. And I still wonder, after all these changes, I still wonder if kids are really better off in their learning and their progress. (DP, Tahi)

But I've always thought that student learning has a lot to do with the teacher that's standing in front of them anyway, so... you know, if the teacher is interesting they can make ... But if you're a good teacher you can make the kids rush to the door and be excited that they're going to maths, you know.... if you've got a teacher who doesn't know how to teach, or doesn't, isn't enthusiastic, the students aren't going to learn really anyway. You might get one or two who are bright that will learn anyway, who are thoroughly interested, but the average student switches off pretty easily in class. And unless you've got an enthusiastic, motivated, exciting teacher, they're not going to learn, are they? (AP, Ono)

I really don't know how I can answer that question fairly. Personally I would say, yes. Just looking at my own children here, and what they're getting. But I think, also within that each teacher has her own style too. Yeah, I think that affects it as well. (BOT member, Toru)

The compliance required by the new accountability regimes was described as producing a new way of teaching:

What they're learning and how they're learning is up, but many things have happened here for a long time. The 'new way' of teaching means that the teachers have got to stick by the rules and do it! Staff here are experienced and supported by the principal. The aim is to teach to the child - whether it's the latest fashion or not is not important, but some have to do that. (BOT member, Rima)

For teachers involved in Special Ed there had been a change of emphasis in relation to student learning:

I'm teaching children with special needs, and yes, there's been a definite change, huge changes within special education... because there have been huge changes in the way we look at special needs children. I think there was a big turn away from curriculum about 10 years ago, looking at functional education. And then the new curriculum arrived, and we're suddenly now looking at curriculum again and adapting it for these children, so that's been huge changes in my way of thinking. The children themselves that I'm now teaching have changed too, and that we're picking up a lot of children who once would have been catered for in the mainstream schools in special classes, and yeah, our work loads, our client is changing anyway. (ST, Tahi)

Discussion

The last decade has been unprecedented in the number and comprehensiveness of changes which school and teachers in New Zealand have had to undertake. To completely revamp a nation's curriculum is a massive undertaking in itself: further, they have had to cope with new systems of administration, management, qualifications, accountability... The political climate of New Right ideology, with its planks of parental choice, marketisation, distrust of teachers and accountability, forms a clamouring background which has impinged in numerous ways on teachers and schools. While there are some difficulties in trying to extract the experience of curriculum reform from the cumulative effect of all these changes, themes emerged from the responses of our participants about the impact of the Curriculum Framework and its associated assessment reforms, which suggest that this has been perhaps the most influential of the reforms of the last decade for the classroom teacher and the students in their classes.

With regard to the implementation of the curriculum there is no doubt that the impact has been huge in its implications for teachers' work. It has steered their workload, programmes, planning, assessment and professional development in recent years. While generally positive about the need for change, and willing to work hard to implement the new curriculum, the participants explained trends brought about by the reform which were both pleasing and disconcerting.

Across aspects of teachers' work such as planning, programmes, assessment, recording and reporting, certain patterns were described which were seen as improving practice, and therefore students' learning. These were patterns of more detail and specificity; links between the components; development of school-wide structures, and possibly more individualization.

The first pattern was the increased detail, specificity, focus, refinement, clarity across all the aforementioned areas. There was greater clarity about what was to be taught, how it would be taught, assessed and then reported to parents. This might be related to the curriculum's achievement objectives which in some subjects set out in behavioural terms quite specifically what is to be learnt. One of the positive

aspects of this was that often students were said to be more involved with their learning as they had more clarity about what they were to learn and how it would be assessed.

However, a more ominous view of this specificity, expressed by one teacher as 'I think it's narrowing what we're doing' (English teacher, Ono), can be developed. These discernible characteristics in the changes to teachers' work which the outcomes-based Curriculum Framework has brought, were predicted by Grundy (1987) in the examination of 'curriculum as product': teachers' work has been bridled, brought much more under the control of government. The talk of greater precision, detail, and specificity, which pervades the descriptions of the change wrought in the areas of planning, programmes, assessment, and reporting, describes teachers striving to conform to the constraints of such a system. Accountability to the Education Review Office and parents has impacted upon teachers. With so much focus on teachers, the voices of learners are absent.

The second theme was of linkage from the curriculum documents to planning, programmes, resources, teaching and assessment and reporting to parents. This follows the model of a linked planning cycle such as feature in, for example, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. (Ministry of Education, 1994, p.23) This cycle, if followed, should set up a system of continuous review of programmes as explained by English teacher at Ono School, and therefore improvement. This can be construed as a particularly linear view of learning, which of course conforms to the structure which the Curriculum Framework endorses.

The third theme was of the development of more school-wide structures to curriculum coverage and assessment than in the past. Schools seem to have set in place frameworks or implementation plans of their own to ensure coverage of the curriculum and to provide the assessment data needed to aggregate for accountability procedures. The positives of this are a clearer designation for teachers of what they are to teach and assess, and when to do so in the school year. However, once again teacher autonomy in curriculum decision-making is being encroached upon. The preoccupation with accountability, conformity, and organisation is pervasive.

Although a topic of some contention, the fourth theme which emerges is of greater individualisation. Many responses suggest that teachers are more aware and focussed on the individual child's learning needs in their planning, teaching and assessment than in the past. This greater centering on the individual would be interpreted as an improvement in practice. However, the descriptions seem to suggest that it is the teacher identifying student needs; dialogue, student input or negotiation barely features. This may be an area which needs further investigation for we did not include students in our study.

Teaching is seen to have changed with the use of a greater variety of more active methods to assist learning. The description of a change in the teacher's role from 'chalk and talk' to a 'facilitator of learning' was common. This might suggest movement to a more interactive, and therefore positive role in helping student learning. Grundy (1987), however points out some of the constraints on teacher's action in the controlling environment of an outcomes-based curriculum as reflecting 'the powers of reaction, not powers of action.' That means teachers can 'facilitate, cooperate and enable or refuse, obstruct and sabotage. But all of these are the actions of receivers or agents, not those of initiators of action.' (p.30) There is frequent perception in our data of the teachers' role changing to that of facilitator and administrator, and of cooperation or compliance with the requirements of curriculum implementation. There was only occasional mention of teachers refusing, obstructing or sabotaging the directives from the State. This is perhaps surprising given their previous central role in curriculum development. However as the BOT member from Rima remarked, 'The new way of teaching means that teachers have to stick by the rules and do it!' As for initiating action, perhaps teachers have been so busy coping with the multitude of changes that their political and social voice in education debate has been stymied.

In alignment with earlier studies (Calder, 1995; Wylie, 1997) there is a continuing preoccupation with assessment, particularly summative assessment. The assessment in primary schools had been focussed on monitoring the learning process rather than on summative purposes (Aikin, 1994). It would seem from our findings that the outcomes-focussed nature of the Curriculum Framework has changed this to a conscious preoccupation with summative aspects of assessment for records, reports and school wide accountability at the expense of developing formative capabilities. This has occurred, despite the claims of the Curriculum Framework about the importance of assessment for better learning. In fact formative assessment barely features in our interviews.

Any change is stressful and there are gains and losses. Change on the profound, continuous scale which teachers have endured has cost substantially for some, but not necessarily in easily quantifiable ways. Some people have left the job, there have been mental health issues for others, there has been some record of less time for initiatives, innovations, and less co-curricular involvement. There was suggestion of teachers having adapted to living with major on-going change. Clearly the impact of the curriculum changes alone brought massive increases to teachers' workloads. The implications for teachers' workload of any change need to be carefully assessed. A lack of understanding of the reality of the classroom and teachers' needs by the Ministry of Education and some Board of Trustees members emerged from our data.

The lessons for the policy makers focus around the process of implementation and relate to money, resources and time. Any major change process must be well resourced to allow time for ongoing professional development for all teachers. There were many concerns related to the implementation process, the inadequacy of professional development for teachers in the curriculum areas and the lack of resources. The speed of implementation was too fast- one curriculum per year. (There has been a subsequent restructuring of the timeline). The inadequacy of the professional development relief from the Ministry of Education was often referred to either to underline the need for all teachers on a staff to have professional development, rather than just one or two, the need for ongoing professional development in the curriculum areas, or to point out the practicalities in terms of school budgets, in funding what was needed by staff. Context variations need to be given consideration. The process of reform can be very different in small schools, rural schools, from large secondary schools. Our schools showed a variation in funding available for professional development. Higher decile schools received much more generous funding.

Worth the trouble?

The mainly ambivalent responses in the area of student learning gains must bring into question the plausibility of the claims which underwrite the Curriculum Framework. That the new curriculum has wrought substantial changes to teachers' work is clear from our study. However whether these changes have been beneficial to the teachers or more importantly the students in their classes is not an issue where there is consensus.

Some of the changes to classroom practice which the Curriculum Framework has brought can be perceived as interfering with an optimal environment for student learning. The focus on precision and detail which the outcomes-focussed curriculum seems to be developing in teachers' classroom practice as they try to teach and assess to levels and meet their accountability requirements, may indeed be fragmenting the curriculum for learners. Learning may have become linear and closed. There is no mention of 'curriculum integration', of 'curriculum negotiation' (Beane, 1997; Boomer, Lester, Onore, & Cook, 1992). Although in some instances there is mention of a more informed learner, with reference to what they are to learn and what is to be assessed, there seems to be no learner input, which may be deleterious for learning.

The focus in classrooms on summative assessment for accountability at the expense of formative assessment, despite the curriculum's rhetoric, may be detrimental to students' learning given the acknowledged importance of the latter in this regard (Black & William, 1998). Assisting teachers and schools to cover their accountability requirements, or making the requirements more realistic, so that a more beneficial balance in the assessment focus can be achieved, seems important.

A teacher's time is finite. Any requirements which intrude on teaching/learning time in the classroom must be productive. There is a need for a more realistic understanding of the day to day demands of teaching when embarking on any reforms. Teaching is a stressful and extremely busy job and any changes to teachers' work must allow time for uptake, or cuts must be made to other aspects of teachers' work, for example in administration, to provide the extra time needed.

The new curriculum might be seen to encroach considerably on teacher initiative and autonomy. It imposes an outcomes-based conception of curriculum. This view of knowledge and learning as hierarchical levels and predetermined has been seriously challenged by Elley (1996), Irwin (1994), Armstrong (1991) and others. To view the relationship between teaching and learning as only linear, cause-effect, and measurable might contradict with other understandings we have about its sometimes complex, nebulous and idiosyncratic nature. For the curriculum reforms to be worth the trouble, those who develop the policy must take into account those who are charged with implementing and receiving it.

Footnotes

- 1.A school which uses Maaori language and ways, in the state system.
- 2.An individual education plan, as used for students with special needs.

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Table 1: Main Features of the Mapping Schools

School	SES Decile	% Maaori	Size	Type
Tahi	1	60	200	urban primary
Rua	9	15	600	urban primary
Toru	1	100	200	kura kaupapa Maaori
Wha	3	35	500	urban intermediate
Rima	5	40	50	rural primary
Ono	1	60	400	rural co-ed secondary
Whitu	8	15	1300	Urban co-ed secondary

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